

FIVE TOWN CABLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Representing the Towns of Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, Sheffield and Stockbridge  
Minutes  
September 14, 2021  
6:30pm  
Stockbridge Town Hall, Stockbridge, MA

MEETING WAS HELD IN PERSON FOLLOWING COVID PROTOCOLS

Members Present: Linda Miller –Lenox  
Dennis Arseneau - Lenox  
Jim Brown – Great Barrington  
Michael Canales – Stockbridge  
Patrick White - Stockbridge

Others Present: John Maher - Charter  
Rich Frederick – CTSB  
Chris Ketchum – Town Administrator Lee/Lenox  
Denise Curtin – Recording Secretary

6:33pm Linda Miller called the meeting to order.

MINUTES: Motion made by Jim Brown to dispense with the reading of the minutes of June 8, 2021.  
Seconded by Dennis Arseneau.  
Motion carried unanimously.

**SPECTRUM REPORT:**

- John Maher presented the Spectrum report.

Subscriber Complaints

- Please continue to have customers call customer service with any issues.
- Every committee member is encouraged to contact John Maher directly any time an issue comes up so that he can act on it immediately and not wait until the next quarterly meeting.
- Linda Miller has received an increased number of complaints regarding the number of rate increases and the amount of these increases.
  - John Maher answered that they try to minimize the rate increases but due to the amount of streaming now we have to be competitive.
  - Programming costs are continually increasing.
  - John Maher stated that subscribers should call customer service and ask how they can reduce their bill.
- Linda Miller requested that John Maher look into the basic rate increases and let her know how many happened in the last year.
- Another major complaint is the constant audio and video freezing, tiling and buffering.
  - Patrick White indicated that he experiences the same issue, however, he was able to troubleshoot the problem and discovered that his older tv was not able to acquire the signal.
- Jim Brown asked “how does customer service log complaints”?

- Answer was that the complaint is escalated if customer service team cannot address the issue.
- The Town of Sheffield has only 1 complaint in a calendar year?

#### Charter/Spectrum article

- John Maher presented an article “National Data Centers Help Reduce Our Carbon Footprint”.
- A portion of this article was read by John Maher. (Copy attached)
- Linda Miller asked how much in savings will you be passing on to the subscribers?
- John Maher answer was “by helping the environment”.

#### Questions from June meeting

- Forms 500, 100, 200
  - The form was submitted for only 1 month.
  - The wrong form was sent to the committee and to the towns.
  - John Maher will look into it.

#### **CTSB REPORT:**

- Rich Frederick presented the CTSB report.

#### Staffing

- CTSB continues to provide our town governments and school districts with full support from our staff and CTSB owned Zoom accounts.
- Currently consists of 3 staff members, including Rich Frederick to cover the heavy load of Zoom meetings.
- Nathan Haney has resigned and Erica Spizz has been hired to replace him. Erica is a long time videographer and member at CTSB. She will begin on October 4<sup>th</sup>.

#### Advertising Campaign

- Since the loss of channels on the lower tier, we have struggled to make our community aware of what we do and how we can be seen.
- The board approved an annual budget of \$15,000 to spend on advertising our channel numbers.
- Ad campaigns in the local Shopper and also a top line banner on the Berkshire Edge that cost \$500.
- The message is “It’s your community Watch” and lists the channel numbers. Ads on the Edge are clickable and will bring them to our website.
- After the “watch” campaign we will move to a “join” campaign to increase our membership.

#### Spectrum Payments

- I was asked at a previous meeting why CTSB was writing a monthly check to Spectrum for internet service.
  - The bill is for enterprise TV, voice internet and data.
  - We only have one cable box and continue to be charged for 4.
  - The monthly bill is \$943.00 and is expected to increase as we have a need for faster upload and download speeds.
  - We received a check in the amount of \$439.58 from Charter but the check was made out to the Town of Sheffield. On April 26<sup>th</sup> Rich communicated via email the error and asked for a resend of the check and did not receive a reply to his email.

#### Stats on Number of Users

- Patrick White asked if any stats were available as to the number of hits and how many people are watching, both on CTSB and cable in general.
- Dennis Arseneau said we should draft a letter to John Maher as to what kind of numbers we are looking for.

### HD Signal

- Linda Miller stated that Spectrum is forcing CTSB to degrade its HD signal in order to put it on 1301, 1302, 1303 and they look like amateur videos.
- Dennis Arseneau read section 5.11 of our contract related to HD signal delivery. Why are these channels not being delivered in HD?
- John Maher and Rich Frederick said that both sides would need to purchase new equipment to provide HD service.

### LICENSE RENEWAL

- License expires February 2023.
- This is a once in 10 year opportunity to give our communities what they need.
- Sub-committee is currently doing a deep dive into the 2013 contract and highlighting where improvement is needed.
- Currently there are 6,759 customers with cable television in our communities.
- The sub-committee has drafted a survey to be sent out in the next couple of months.
- Dennis Arseneau thanked Linda Miller for leading us through the process.

### NEW BUSINESS

- Future of CTSB revolves around our contract renewal.
- In our contract renewal we will be asking for Capital Funds from Spectrum for expansion of the current building for adding a kitchen to enable CTSB to provide cooking shows, adding new staff members and purchasing new computers.
- Rich Frederick will be developing the 5 year plan.
- Why is “closed captioning” not offered?
  - The cost would be \$21,000 plus monthly fees.
  - Pittsfield recently invested in the necessary equipment and it currently does not work.

### OTHER BUSINESS

- Jim Brown made a motion to ask the 5 towns to commit \$500 each to help us defray any legal fees that may arise during contract negotiations.
  - Motion seconded by Patrick White.
  - Motion carried unanimously.
- Linda Miller told the committee that she received resignation notice of Michael Kernan due to him relocating out of the area.
- Jim Brown also stated that he would be resigning as well, as he is also moving.

Motion made to adjourn by Dennis Arseneau, seconded by Jim Brown. Motion carried unanimously and meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm.

**NEXT MEETING DATE** – Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at 6:30pm in Great Barrington.

Respectfully submitted,  
Denise Curtin  
Recording Secretary